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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents suggestions for things people can do to help meet the America Reads Challenge of having all children read well and independently by the end of third grade. One of the ways to meet this challenge is through the research-based community reading initiative, called READ*WRITE*NOW!, which encourages students to read and write at least 30 minutes a day for 5 days a week. The introduction discusses how to start an after-school, weekend, or summer literacy program. The booklet then presents simple things that families, child care providers, schools, librarians, grandparents, seniors, and concerned citizens, community, cultural, and religious organizations, universities, employers, and the media can do to help. Contains a list of seven America Reads Challenge materials and addresses of 18 public and private organizations that are sources of literacy information. (RS)

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SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO

To Help
All Children
Read Well and
Independently
by the End
of Third Grade

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AMERICA READS CHALLENGE:
READ*WRITE*NOW!

U.S. Department of Education

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U.S. Department of Education 1997

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YOU CAN HELP MEET THE CHALLENGE

You can help meet President Clinton's America Reads Challenge, a national, grassroots literacy effort to help all children read well and independently by the end of third grade.

Everyone has something important to contribute to the America Reads Challenge. You can change the life of a child by reading daily to your own child, by serving as a tutor in your community to another child, or by joining together with other members of your community to start or expand a local literacy program.

- In this booklet, you will find suggestions for simple things you can do to help meet the America Reads Challenge. You can help as a parent, school, librarian, concerned citizen, community organization, university, employer, or as a member of the media.

We hope you will join the millions of people in the United States who are already helping to meet this Challenge by working with children in reading and other language skills. Whether you help as an individual, or join with others, every contribution toward this effort makes a difference in the future of our children.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.





SIMPLE THINGS

HOW TO START AN AFTER-SCHOOL, WEEKEND, OR SUMMER LITERACY PROGRAM

What is the America Reads Challenge?

President Clinton proposed the America Reads Challenge in August 1996 to involve every American in helping our children to read well and independently by the end of third grade.

By developing and expanding current community literacy efforts, the America Reads Challenge can help many more children increase their language and reading skills and achievement. Teachers, principals, librarians, literacy organizations, businesses, national service programs, and nonprofits can all play a key role in strengthening learning through after-school, summer, and weekend reading programs. Families can serve as their child's first teacher, and community members can serve as tutors, mentors, and reading partners.

What is READ*WRITE*NOW!?

READ*WRITE*NOW! is a research-based community reading initiative that encourages students to read and write at least 30 minutes a day for 5 days a week. At least one of those days a week, children read with a learning partner or tutor. Children also learn one new vocabulary word a day and get a library card. This initiative was developed by researchers and practitioners, and is supported by over 75 national education, literacy, community, and religious organizations.

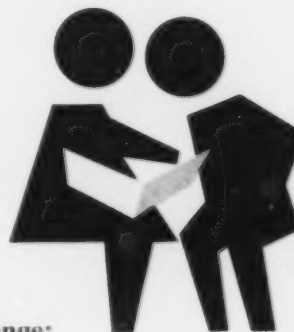
READ*WRITE*NOW! materials for families and caregivers of children from birth through Grade 6, as well as free tutoring materials, are available through the Department's home page (<http://www.ed.gov>) and its toll-free 1-800-USA-LEARN number as long as supplies last.

How Can I Start an America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW Reading Program in My Community?

- 1. Bring together family, school, library, college, and community organizations that have a stake in helping all children read well and independently by the end of third grade.**

Parents, teachers, representatives of existing literacy programs, the local library, nearby colleges and universities, local businesses, area youth service organizations, civic associations, museums, arts and cultural organizations, retired teachers, bookstores, local newspapers, and religious groups can all help.

- 2. Ask them to join you in starting a local America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! Community Reading Program.**



SIMPLE THINGS

3. Begin planning.

- A.** Ask your local school principal/s to help you identify the number of children who need extra help in reading and writing. Estimate the number of tutors needed for a program. Include children with special needs. Consider tutoring family members who cannot read or have low-level literacy skills. Contact the Corporation for National Service for a list of community service resources dedicated to supporting volunteers and tutoring activities.
- B.** Identify the resources, training, and coordination that will be needed to conduct a program and who can provide those resources. Try to provide for resources that children with special needs require.
- C.** Develop a plan for the project with time lines for starting, implementing, and evaluating it.

4. Launch your America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! Community Reading Project

- A.** Set up a central point of contact in the community. Identify who will receive calls from the public and get the word out about the project. This could be a 1-800# at the school, college, or library, serviced by volunteers from the community.
- B.** Identify a community coordinator. The coordinator can be from a school, library, college, or the community. This person should make sure that the work of the project gets done by building partnerships and calling upon the partners to conduct aspects of the program.
- C.** Find safe sites for tutoring that are convenient and inviting to students (including those with special needs) and families and easily accessible to tutors.
- D.** Ask principals and Title I, Head Start, and reading teachers, as well as parents at PTA and other parent meetings, to identify students that need help.
- E.** Invite teachers and other school staff to provide special support for children with severe difficulties in reading.

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- F.** Recruit tutors. Ask parents, principals, teachers, librarians, and local media to help recruit tutors from the community. Use middle and high school students and college work-study students as tutors as well as retirees for young children. Contact your local senior center or Retired and Senior Volunteer Program office to help identify available volunteers in your community. Identify tutors who would be willing to work with children with special needs.
- G.** Screen tutors. Follow local and state procedures for screening and using volunteers.
- H.** Train tutors. Tutors are most effective and successful when they are trained and well coordinated. Work with your local reading teachers, local literacy groups, librarians, neighboring colleges of education, and reading supervisors in your district and state to provide training for tutors. Request assistance from your school district's special education office to provide training for volunteers working with students who have learning difficulties.
- I.** Link students who need help with tutors. Make sure students and tutors know what is expected of them and are supported as needed. Check calendars each week to see what days and time of day tutors and students are meeting and contact them if there are any changes, especially if a back up tutor is needed for a session. Provide follow-up with students and tutors to see if there are any questions.
- J.** Resolve transportation and other issues that can affect students and tutors.
- K.** Anticipate liability issues. Make sure your host site's liability insurance adequately covers the activities of this project.
- L.** Work with local reading teachers, librarians, and literacy groups to find suitable materials. There are a number of commercial tutoring materials available for this purpose as well as free America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! materials. Master copies of these materials for families, teachers, librarians, and caregivers can be obtained from the U.S. Department of Education's Internet web site (<http://www.ed.gov>) or through the Department's toll-free number 1-800-USA-LEARN, as long as supplies last.



SIMPLE THINGS

FAMILIES CAN DO TO HELP

- A. Read to and with your children for 30 minutes every day.** It is very important to read out loud to your children before they start school. Help your children to read with you. Ask them to find letters and words on the page and talk with your children about the story.
- B. Talk with infants and young children before they learn to read.** Talk with your children all day long, using short, simple sentences. Talking with them even before they can speak will help them later when they learn to read and write.
- C. Help your children to read on their own.** Reading at home helps children do better in school. Have lots of children's books in your home and visit the library every week. Help your children get their own library cards and let them pick out their own books.
- D. If your child has a developmental delay, your child may find reading frustrating.** Have books on tape in your home. Borrow or buy a tape player that is easy to work. If you cannot find recordings of your child's favorite books, you or a family member could make recordings of them for your child to listen to while looking at the books.
- E. Help your child to see that reading is important.** Suggest reading as a free-time activity. Make sure your children have time in their day to read. Set a good example for your children by reading newspapers, magazines, and books.
- F. Set up a reading area in your home.** Keep books that interest your children in places where they can easily reach them. As your children become better readers, make sure that you add harder books to your collection.
- G. Give your children writing materials.** Children want to learn how to write and to practice writing. Help them learn by having paper, pencils, pens, or crayons for them in your home. Help your children write if they ask you. If your child has a special learning or physical need, regular pens and pencils may not be the best choice. Ask your pediatrician or people who work with your child at school or at the child care center to suggest other writing materials your child can use.
- H. Read and write with your children in their native language.** Practicing their first language will help your children learn to read and write English.

SIMPLE THINGS

- I. Talk with your children as you do daily activities together.** When you take your children places, talk with them about what you are doing and ask them questions. If your child cannot hear, use whatever form of communication your child usually uses.
- J. Ask your children to describe events in their lives.** Talking about their experiences makes children think about them. Giving detailed descriptions and telling complete stories also helps children learn about how stories are written and what the stories they read mean.
- K. Restrict the amount and kind of TV your children watch.** Watch educational TV programs with your children that teach letter sounds and words or give information about nature and science.
- L. Keep track of your children's progress in school.** Visit your children's classrooms to learn how your children are doing in school and how you can help your children become better students. Ask about the school's reading program and where your children need help.
- M. Become a learning partner/reading tutor to a child in your neighborhood or from your local elementary school.** Volunteer to read with or to a child for 30 minutes a week for at least eight weeks. Take the child to the library to get him or her a library card.
- N. Help start a community reading program.** A good way to begin is to help set up an America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! program. Offer to volunteer as a reading tutor or serve as a community contact coordinator for the program. Call 1-800-USA-LEARN for America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! materials.



SIMPLE THINGS

CHILD CARE PROVIDERS CAN DO TO HELP

- A. Read to infants even before they are able to talk.** Make books part of your one-on-one time with babies. Although they don't always understand exactly what you are saying, babies love to listen to voices. Over time, babies will associate pleasant feelings with books and reading.
- B. Set up a reading area.** Create a colorful or cozy space where children can read or you can read to them. Make sure the area is well lit and that interesting books are placed where children can easily see and reach them. Include books for children with special needs. The space does not need to be very large. It is more important that it is well defined and that children feel comfortable using it. Plan time when children can look at books on their own.
- C. Read to children every day.** Read with small groups, share illustrations, and change your voice to make stories come to life. Also, read one-on-one with children when they ask you to or when you want to share a book. Use these times to encourage children to talk about the story and characters and to share their ideas.
- D. Encourage volunteers to read with children.** Identify children who need extra help in reading and contact volunteer groups at nearby colleges, high schools, community organizations, religious groups, businesses, or senior centers. Include children with special needs. In addition to reading with volunteers, children can draw pictures about the characters in the book or make up stories of their own. After listening to the child's story, volunteers might print or type the story for the child to keep.
- E. Read with children about their native culture.** Children often respond well to stories about their own cultures. This practice also exposes other children to cultures different from their own. In addition, offer books without words so children can make up their own stories to go with the pictures.
- F. Encourage families to read with children.** Support family reading times by allowing children to borrow books overnight or for a few days. Sign up for programs that provide free or inexpensive reading materials. Also, encourage families who speak languages other than English to read with their children in their native language. This will help children learn to write and read English as well.
- G. Teach children rhymes, songs, and poems.** Make up stories about children in the group and include their names in familiar songs. Ask families to help you learn songs, poems, and stories in the children's home languages.

SIMPLE THINGS

- H. Talk with young children about their own lives.** Make a special effort to talk with infants and babies. Responding to their cooing and babbling as if you understand them helps them learn about language. As children grow older, encourage them to join you in conversation and be interested in what they have to say. Giving details, descriptions, and telling stories not only helps children learn how stories are written and what they mean, but it also builds vocabulary and communication skills. Do not focus on correcting grammar; instead, model correct grammar yourself.
-  **Plan a field trip to the library.** Contact your local library to arrange a guided tour that explains how children can use the library. Learn about the library's services for young children. Ask about bilingual story times, special story hours for child care programs, and workshops for caregivers. Discuss how children and families can obtain and use their own library cards.
- J. Help start a community family reading program.** A good way to begin is to help set up an America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! program. Consider inviting families to attend reading and parenting discussions. Make sure these gatherings are held at a time when family members can attend. When necessary, send information home about these programs in the family's native language.
- K. Talk with young children about their own lives.** Make a special effort to talk with infants and babies. Responding to their cooing and babbling as if you understand them helps them learn about language. As children grow older, encourage them to join you in conversation and be interested in what they have to say. Giving details, descriptions, and telling stories not only helps children learn how stories are written and what they mean, but it also builds vocabulary and communication skills. Do not focus on correcting grammar; instead, model correct grammar yourself.
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- M. Help start a community family reading program.** A good way to begin is to help set up an America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! program. Consider inviting families to attend reading and parenting discussions. Make sure these gatherings are held at a time when family members can attend. When necessary, send information home about these programs in the family's native language.

SIMPLE THINGS

SCHOOLS CAN DO TO HELP

School Personnel and Staff:

- A.** **Start a schoolwide or community reading program.** Two good ways to begin are to set up an America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! program or to sponsor an after-school AmeriCorps project. Identify students who need extra help in reading. Keep your school open in the evenings and on weekends to provide a safe site for children and tutors. Encourage older students to volunteer as reading tutors and reading teachers to help train tutors. Ask your librarian to identify appropriate reading materials. Ask your school district's special education office to provide special training for volunteers working with students with disabilities. When children complete the program, reward them with a special activity such as a field trip.
- B.** **Encourage family members to get involved in teaching and learning reading skills and raising standards.** Let families know what they can do at home to help children become better readers, so that their children can read independently and well by the end of third grade. Send home periodic progress reports on each child with suggestions on how families can help their children improve.
- C.** **Publish a multilingual school newsletter.** Take advantage of your school's ethnic diversity. Encourage multilingual teachers, families, and students to help. If you do not have a multilingual population, encourage your school's language clubs to contribute.

Teachers:

- A.** **Rigorously teach reading and writing skills and the core academic subjects.** Focus reading activities on developing higher-order thinking skills as well as on basic skills. Compare your reading curriculum and materials with those of the most successful schools and the best state standards.
- B.** **Set high expectations for your students and encourage families to do the same.** If you expect a lot from your students, they will work to meet your expectations and expect more of themselves. Consult with appropriate school or district staff on how to extend high expectations to include students with learning challenges and special needs.



SIMPLE THINGS

- C. Encourage students to read at home with their families.** Provide suggested age-graduated children's book lists to families. Families are often unsure of the level at which their child reads; book lists can help them choose books of appropriate difficulty, and provide examples of high-quality children's books. Develop a rewards system for students who take books home, read with their families, and report back on the books they have read.
- D. Plan a field trip to the local library.** Contact the head librarian to arrange for a guided tour and explanation of how students can use the library. Have all students sign up for their own library cards during this visit. If any of your students have visual, hearing, or learning disabilities, tell the librarians before the visit so that they can make the necessary accommodations. Ask about special resources such as books on tape, sign-language interpreters, books in Braille or large print, and accessibility for wheelchairs.
- Encourage students to go to the school library and to the local library after school.** Such visits will help develop a link in the child's mind between free time and reading. Work with the school librarian or media specialist to place a collection of age-appropriate books on topics of high interest to your students in a special area.
- F. Use interesting community settings to stimulate reading and writing.** Organize students and their families to conduct an oral history project, a history or case study of their school, or a neighborhood project that involves collecting local stories or recipes for a community cookbook.
- G. Have students frequently work in groups.** Group work allows students with varying levels of literacy and language proficiency to both gain from and contribute to each other's learning. Rotate group members regularly to ensure that students work with all of their classmates.
- H. Encourage the academic achievement of students with limited English proficiency.** Include books in the native languages of students in the classroom library. Obtain or develop appropriate native language materials and technology for classroom use. Provide daily opportunities for students to read and write in both their first and second languages.

SIMPLE THINGS

Administrators:

- A. Encourage your teachers to work together to teach reading and writing across all the subjects.** Encourage them to develop interdisciplinary courses. Provide opportunities for special educators to share with general educators effective strategies for working with students who have learning challenges. Introduce challenging reading and writing activities and provide technology to engage all students.
- B. Offer extended learning time for students after school and in the summer to increase reading opportunities.** Keep your school open beyond regular school hours and in the summer as a community learning center. Organize volunteer reading partners to come in during those times and read with your students. Request assistance from your school district's special education office to provide training for volunteers working with students who have learning challenges.
- C. Establish a family literacy program.** Provide literacy, parenting, and early childhood education programs for language-minority families and other families with literacy needs and their children. Devote a PTA meeting to how to become a reading tutor and to inform parents of effective methods of reading with their children. Send home information about these programs in the family's native language, where necessary.
- D. Implement systematic and routine homework schedules.** Help families know what to expect of their children regularly and how to monitor assignments. Ensure that all teachers regularly assign challenging homework. Develop and send home a sheet of suggestions for families about how to help their children with their schoolwork.
- E. Provide high quality staff development in second-language acquisition and bilingualism.** Students with limited English proficiency experience greater success in school when their teachers understand the role of the first language in literacy learning. Encourage teachers to become familiar with the native language of their students.



SIMPLE THINGS

LIBRARIANS CAN DO TO HELP

- A. Learn more about the America Reads Challenge.** Call 1-800-USA-LEARN for fliers on the America Reads Challenge and READ*WRITE*NOW! and provide them to the public. Contact your local READ*WRITE*NOW! program and see how your library can help.
- B. Work with local partners to start a community reading program.** One good way to begin is to set up an America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! program. Identify quality reading materials for the program. Look into providing materials in Braille, large-print texts, books on tape. Use communication specialists such as sign-language interpreters. Establish structured learning time at the library to give children who need extra help opportunities to become successful readers. Volunteer to train tutors or serve as a community coordinator. Offer the library as a safe site for the community program. Promote a special sign-up day for children to come in and get their own library cards.
- C. Help children learn how to use the library's resources effectively.** Provide free orientation sessions on how to use the library. Encourage local businesses and community groups to donate computer hardware and software, then offer special sessions for children to be trained in the use of the computer.
- D. Help parents who cannot read or have low-level literacy skills.** Offer tutoring services to those who cannot read or who have low-level literacy skills. Contact your local school, church, or neighborhood organization to find a tutor.
- E. Expand your library's resources, particularly computers and children's software programs.** Let families and children know that the Internet offers them a wealth of free information. Offer free introductory sessions on how to use these resources. Include equipment and software for children with physical and learning disabilities.
- F. Ask your local schools how you can help them improve students' reading.** Contact your local schools and offer to give short library presentations in the classrooms. Ask how the library can help meet the needs of children with disabilities.
- G. Increase opportunities for preschoolers and their child care workers to visit the library.** Invite groups of preschoolers from local child care centers to attend special reading programs at the library. Offer recognition to children who have read (or listened to) a certain number of books. Let caregivers know that they should encourage families to visit the library with their children.

SIMPLE THINGS

- H. Help motivate all children to read for enjoyment.** Identify children's favorite subjects and direct them to books, magazines, book/cassette kits, videos, computer software, and other library resources. Make the necessary arrangements for special resources to enable children with special needs also to read for enjoyment.
-  **Work with local parent groups to establish a parent or grandparent corps of volunteer reading tutors.** Identify a volunteer coordinator, reading specialist, teacher, or librarian to plan and develop procedures for recruitment and service. Contact the local PTA, senior center, or Retired and Senior Volunteer Program office to recruit volunteers. Consider helping children with learning challenges and special needs. Provide the training tutors will need when working with these students. Ask your local Foster Grandparent Program to provide senior citizen mentors with this training.
- J. Collect and distribute information that will help families improve their children's reading skills.** Circulate America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! materials and encourage similar efforts in the community. Display and provide suggested book lists for children of a wide age range.



SIMPLE THINGS

GRANDPARENTS, SENIORS, AND CONCERNED CITIZENS CAN DO TO HELP

- A.** **Become a learning partner/reading tutor to a child in your neighborhood or from your local elementary school.** Volunteer to read with or to a child for 30 minutes, once a week, for at least eight weeks. Take the child to the library to get him or her a library card.
- B.** **Start a community reading program.** One good way to begin is to set up an America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! project. Volunteer to serve as a tutor or a community coordinator. Contact your local senior centers, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program office, Foster Grandparents Program, retirement homes, and other community groups to recruit tutors. Work with local schools to set up matches between community members and children.
- C.** **Ask your public librarian how you can help at your local library.** Offer to volunteer after school in the children's section, reading stories or helping children pick out books. Offer to develop a program or support an existing summer reading program at the library.
- D.** **Encourage community businesses and nonprofit organizations to help support community reading programs.** Establish contacts by visiting local businesses and organizations. Encourage them to donate supplies and to allow their employees time off to volunteer in local schools. Make sure the supplies they donate meet the needs of children who have special learning or physical challenges by including materials such as books in Braille, large-print texts, and books on tape.
-  **E.** **Develop a monthly program at your library, school, or community center in which seniors discuss their oral histories with children.** Speak with local retirement homes and senior centers to enlist seniors who would be willing to tell children a highlight of their life stories. Arrange for a location where the program can be held, and advertise it.
- F.** **Be supportive of school, community, and state efforts to meet high reading academic standards.** Let your neighbors know the importance of reading and meeting the President's AMERICA READS CHALLENGE. Make an effort to stay informed about your local school's reading programs and current issues.

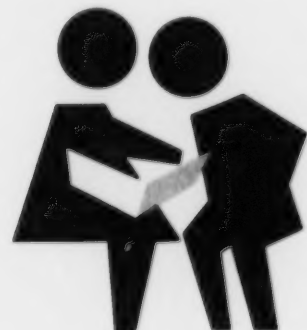
SIMPLE THINGS

COMMUNITY, CULTURAL, AND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS CAN DO TO HELP

- A. Encourage the staff of your organization or the members of your group to volunteer as tutors to read with children.** Contact literacy programs already in place through local schools, libraries, or other community groups and offer volunteers from your organization to support their work. Offer release time to allow staff to meet with students.
- B. Start a community reading program.** One good way to begin is to set up a summer America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! program. Encourage your members or staff to volunteer as tutors. Provide transportation for children and tutors. Offer your organization's building as a safe site in which the program can take place.
- C. Work with preschool children.** Donate children's books to an early childhood center, mothers' day out program, or parent/child play group. Organize a program in which members volunteer to read to children in these programs each week.
- D. Sponsor trips to the local library.** Help provide transportation or escorts for neighborhood children during weekly trips to the library. Ask whether any children have special transportation needs such as a wheelchair lift and try to link them with an escort who can meet those needs.
- E. Get families involved in local reading efforts.** Parental involvement has a crucial impact on children's academic achievement. Take information about local reading programs into the school. Encourage families whose children have special needs to participate in local reading efforts.
- F. Think of ways your organization's expertise can help make stories come alive for students.** By adding music, movement, or improvisation, performers can help students respond to and better understand a story. Develop a weekly storytelling hour at your organization, using your members' individual talents.
- G. Help train other volunteers.** Work with reading specialists from your school system or an America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! program to obtain training for your volunteers. Request assistance from your school district's special education office to provide training for volunteers working with students who have learning challenges.

SIMPLE THINGS

- H.** Help students write their own stories and produce them in book or dramatic form. Students may develop more interest in reading the stories of others once they have tried writing themselves. Organize an event for the students to read or perform their written work.
- I.** Hold an essay or speech contest among local children on the topic of how “Reading Has Made a Difference in My Life.” These stories can reinforce the benefits of learning to read and help set high reading standards. Offer a small prize related to literacy, such as a reference book or a bookstore gift certificate.
- J.** Cooperate with other community organizations and school staff on reading activities for students. Rarely can one organization or individual “do it all.” Contact other community organizations that have different expertise from your own. Ask for and offer help to improve and expand your reading activities. Contact other reading programs and school staff for guidance.
- K.** Find quality books for a wide age range that reflect the interests of children in your community. Offer these in the form of book lists or actual books to your local reading program. Offer to supplement the reading with related activities.



SIMPLE THINGS

UNIVERSITIES CAN DO TO HELP

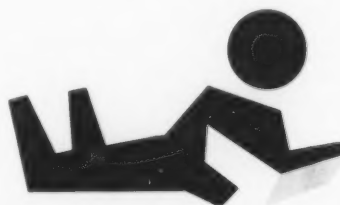
Students:

- A.** Ask your financial aid adviser if your university has officially signed on to the **America Reads Challenge**. President Clinton has taken a major step in fulfilling the America Reads Challenge and promoting his national service agenda by calling upon colleges to voluntarily invest significant portions of their Federal Work Study dollars toward tutoring children in reading.
- B.** Volunteer to read with or to a child at a local school. Visit your university's community service center or contact the volunteer coordinator to be matched with a child. If your campus does not have these resources, call the local elementary school and ask whether you can be matched with a child who needs a learning partner. Find out what opportunities are available through your local YMCA/YWCA, Girl Scout, Learn and Serve America, and AmeriCorps programs.
- C.** Get the local associations and organizations on your campus involved in literacy/mentoring community service projects. Contact organization presidents to discuss ways in which the organization may be able to contribute to existing literacy projects or to initiate a project. Encourage members of groups you belong to, to volunteer as reading tutors.
- D.** Use student newspapers, radio and television stations, campus electronic bulletin boards, and other on-line information sources to promote student involvement in the **America Reads Challenge**. Provide notices about school or local literacy projects to the person in charge of advertising; include in the notice a request for volunteers and a contact name and phone number for those who are interested.
- E.** Work with local precollege youth organizations such as **Boys and Girls Clubs** or the **YMCA/YWCA**. Talk with the heads of local precollege youth organizations to discover how students at your university can act as learning partners or mentors to their members. Post flyers on campus to inform students about the program and encourage them to participate.

SIMPLE THINGS

Faculty:

- A. Use your expertise to develop training materials for reading tutors.** The President of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education and the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education are encouraging colleges of education to help prepare tutors to help children meet the President's America Reads Challenge. As you develop materials, request that colleagues in special education contribute strategies for training tutors of children with special needs.
- B. Develop and conduct evaluations of local reading initiatives.** Work with these initiatives to develop and conduct evaluations of their programs. Advise them on how they can use the evaluation findings to become more effective.
- C. Share current research on reading and mentoring with organizers of local reading initiatives or conduct new research in this field.** Many local literacy groups are eager for research that will support and help guide their work. Contact local reading programs and literacy groups to discover areas where research is needed.
- D. Offer training on how to become an effective reading partner to interested students, community members, and families.** Use your skills as an educator to help others develop effective mentoring skills and habits. Develop a training guide. Post information and sign-up sheets on campus and at your local library and school to inform the community and attract interest.
- E. Include tutoring/mentoring skills and service learning opportunities in academic programs involving teacher preparation, social service, and human resources.** Incorporate becoming a learning partner into your syllabus. Part-time student volunteer tutoring activities can provide enrichment to education, social services, psychology, and English classes. Match students in these programs with local schoolchildren to give your students one-on-one experience as mentors.



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Administrators:

- A. Assign and train Work-Study students as reading tutors.** Increase the percentage of Work-Study slots that are reserved for reading tutoring. The Secretary of Education has waived the matching requirement for students serving as reading tutors to preschool and elementary schoolchildren. This 100 percent federal funding of Federal Work-Study reading tutors facilitates the participation of postsecondary institutions in the America Reads Challenge. Contact the local school's reading specialist or a local community-based organization such as Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs/YWCAs, Girl Scouts, and AmeriCorps projects to help develop an effective training program for Work-Study students.
- B. Include reading tutoring/mentoring as an option for students participating in community service projects.** Encourage your campus community service center or volunteer coordinator to develop a partnership with the local school so students can serve as learning partners or tutors to schoolchildren.
- C. Provide space for local reading programs.** Open classrooms or lecture halls to literacy programs on weekends and other times when they are not in use. Encourage students to volunteer as assistants.
- D. Sponsor an on-campus summer reading program for elementary schoolchildren.** Invite professors and qualified students to teach sessions. Contact the community library and local reading programs to encourage their participation.
- E. Make campus computer resources available to local families and their children.** Open campus computer clusters to the public during off-times. Offer free orientation sessions for people who have never used the Internet before. Provide a list of educational sites related to reading.



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EMPLOYERS CAN DO TO HELP

- A. Encourage parents/employees to read and write with their children.** Give children's books to employees who have worked overtime to thank them for time away from their families and to encourage them to read with their children. Copublish America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! materials for distribution to your employees' children or schools with whom you have a partnership arrangement.
- B. Encourage your customers to read and write with their children.** Set up a supervised reading area for children while they wait for their families to shop. Place children's books and children's magazines in lounge areas or waiting rooms. Place word games on placemats to encourage reading and writing.
- C. Establish a lending library in the workplace so that employees can take books and other reading materials home to their children.** Contact the local library to obtain suggested children's book lists. Ask employees to donate books and books on tape that their children have outgrown.
- D. Set up high-quality, educational preschools and day care centers at or near work sites.** Set up a program of educational, supervised activities for your employees' school-age children. Include a well-stocked collection of children's books and encourage child care providers to read to the children daily.
-  **Advocate family-centered policies.** Urge employees (parents and others) to use flex-time or give them extra time off to volunteer as tutors for children at local schools. Allow employees to use some paid time each month to serve as a learning partner to a child.
- F. Develop a program to bring children to your work site for tutoring.** Bringing children to the work site for tutoring gives them a safe place to go after school hours, helps improve their schoolwork, and makes mentoring and tutoring convenient for employees. Provide support for training reading tutors both in schools and in the workplace. Contact your local school district's special education department for assistance on how to address and support the training of tutors for students with special needs.
- G. Establish and support bilingual tutoring and classroom programs.** If your business already has a tutoring program, think about adding a bilingual component. If it does not, consider starting a bilingual program. Encourage bilingual employees to volunteer as reading tutors and purchase bilingual teaching and reading materials for them.

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- H. Establish a national program for employees to tutor, mentor, and allow children to shadow model employees.** Encourage each affiliate, franchise, or company branch to get involved with its local schools by tutoring or mentoring students. Allow students to shadow workers for a day to understand how the skills they learn in school will someday be used in the workplace.
-  **J. Develop public service announcements for newspapers, billboards, television, and radio that can help spread the message on the importance of reading.** Help get the whole community involved in their local schools. Reach out to community members who do not have children. Everyone has a skill to offer from which children can benefit.
- J. Support funding for leadership development and team-building among school district staff, school board members, community leaders, and families.** Sponsor workshops to help the community set goals for its children and their schools. Bring in reading specialists and teachers to explain the most effective ways to increase literacy skills.
- K. Help build coalitions to coordinate literacy efforts in the private sector.** Contact your local newspapers, school district, and other businesses to create district or regional efforts to improve reading skills among children. Establish a relationship with local schools to determine where your help is needed most.
-  **L. Provide books, videos, consultants, and other resources to schools.** Contact your local school's administrators to determine which resources are most needed. Rebuild or refurbish school libraries so that they become the center of the school's literacy activities. Help to guarantee that schools have the most modern teaching materials, computers, books, and videos. Ask the school administrator about whether there is a need for your company to provide special materials/equipment for children with special needs.
- M. Start a community reading program.** One good way to begin is to set up an America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! program. Provide space in your office building for the program's operations. Provide transportation for children and tutors. Encourage your employees to volunteer as tutors.

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THE MEDIA CAN DO TO HELP

- A. Highlight successful reading programs.** Cover stories about literacy events sponsored by schools, libraries, AmeriCorps projects, and communities and successful participants in them. Feature individual success stories and "unsung tutoring heroes." Provide information on how others can get involved.
- B. Provide free newspapers for school use.** Train teachers on how to use the newspaper in the classroom. Start a Vacation Donation program allowing subscribers on vacation to donate their unread issues to schools.
- C. Start a Community Volunteer Alert Program.** Publicize a weekly listing of volunteer programs in need of tutors. Provide contact names and numbers.
- D. Help your community learn how to help children read better.** Publicize tips such as those listed in this booklet and information about how to get involved with local reading programs. Promote literacy resources available in the community for families.
- E. Keep families and the community informed about local student performance.** Publicize school reading test scores and school efforts to reach high standards. Highlight a "student of the month" from an area school who has excelled academically in language arts or reading.
- F. Sponsor literacy-focused events such as a Get a Library Card Day, Read-A-Thons, Book Drives, or Essay Contests.** Contact your local library or literacy program for information about existing programs you can support and for help in organizing such events. Publicize a monthly calendar of these events and a short item about the outcome of each.
- G. Support local literacy programs by donating advertising space.** Produce a community public service announcement in support of reading. Publicize recommended reading lists for books that families can read with children of different ages.



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LITERACY RESOURCES

America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! Materials:

The READ*WRITE*NOW! Basic Kit: A basic literacy kit to get children preschool through grade six and reading partners started. The kit includes an activities book, a vocabulary log, a bookmark, and two certificates. Every public library in the country will have kits.

The Early Childhood Kits — READY*SET*READ: Two basic literacy kits — one for parents and one for caregivers — to enhance the language skills of young children from birth to age five. Each kit includes an activities book, a growth chart, and a calendar of activities for children.

The READ*WRITE*NOW! Learning Partners Guide: A guide to help tutors and learning partners work with children to develop their reading and writing skills.

The READ*WRITE*NOW! Just Add Kids! Resource Directory: A list of national organizations that can be useful in starting and supporting community reading projects.

Learning to Read, Reading to Learn: A kit for teachers and learning partners to help children with learning disabilities learn to read and become better readers. Each kit includes information about how children learn to read, tips for parents and teachers, a bibliography of early reading instruction, and a resource guide.

Checkpoints for Progress: Developmental milestones that describe the reading and writing skills children should attain by developmental period to show reading readiness or reading on level. Reading examples by grade level are also provided within each developmental period. The checkpoints are divided into two documents — one for families and communities and one for teachers and learning partners.

Simple Things You Can Do To Help All Children Read Well and Independently by the End of Third Grade: A guide for all members of the community on how to help children learn to read and become better readers. The simple suggestions are divided by types of community members, such as families, school personnel, librarians, concerned citizens, and employers. The guide also includes an outline of how to start a community literacy program.

All of these publications are available on the Internet (<http://www.ed.gov>). For more information on the America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW!, call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

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Federal Sources of Assistance for Children Birth Through Grade Six:

Title I and Even Start

U.S. Department of Education
Compensatory Education Programs
Office of Elementary and
Secondary Education
600 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 4400 - Portals Building
Washington, DC 20202-6132

Head Start

U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Public Affairs
370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Parent Training and Information Systems Program

Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education
600 Independence Avenue, SW
Switzer Building, Room 4613
Washington, DC 20202

Office of Educational

Research and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20208

Child Care Bureau

U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Public Affairs
370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Additional Sources of Assistance If Your Child Has a Reading or Learning Disability:

Office of Special Education Programs

U.S. Department of Education
600 Independence Avenue, SW
Switzer Building, Room 4613
Washington, DC 20202

Learning Disabilities Association of America

4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234
Web: <http://www.ldanatl.org>

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Reading and Learning Disability Sources (cont'd):

NICHY

P.O. Box 1492
Washington, DC 20013-1492
Web: nichy@aed.org

ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education

The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

National Center for Learning Disabilities

381 Park Avenue South
Suite 1420
New York, NY 10016

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

Library of Congress
1291 Taylor Street, NW
Washington, DC 20542

National Association of Developmental Disabilities Councils (NADDC)

1234 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Suite 103
Washington, DC 20005

Additional Literacy Resources:

Corporation for National Service

1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525
Web: <http://www.cns.gov>

Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. (RIF)

Publications Department
Smithsonian Institution
600 Maryland Avenue SW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20024-2520
Web: <http://www.si.edu/rif>

International Reading Association

800 Barksdale Road
P.O. Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714-8139
Web: <http://www.reading.org>

National Institute for Literacy (NIFL)

800 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20037-1230
Web: <http://www.nifl.gov>

American Library Association (ALA)

50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611
Web: <http://www.ala.org/alsc.html>

National Center for Family Literacy

Waterfront Plaza
Suite 200
325 West Main Street
Louisville, KY 40202-4251



ARC 97-4500

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